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ABSTRACT

Efforts to alleviate the emotional pain of terminally ill children and their parents have led many physicians to turn to child psychiatrists for psychological support and treatment services. This book, written by a child psychotherapist, offers an overview of children's attitudes to death and considers the moral and ethical issues raised by treatments for life-threatening illness. The text focuses on children with cancer and explores the climate in which they find themselves. A central question addressed here is whether or not caretakers should ever shift their focus from one of working towards the day when the child will recover to one where death is accepted. Some of the questions covered here include how to talk to children about death, the stages of emotional reactions to life-threatening illness, and the prolonging of death. Separate chapters are also devoted to what happens after the death of a child. Much of the book presents the personal experience with a 7-year-old boy who suffered from leukemia. This section is in the form of a diary and covers the period from the initial visit with the boy until the child's death several months later. Three appendices present an analysis of the boy's drawings, extracts from the Nuremburg Code, and a reflection on a work by Isabel Menzies Lyth. Contains a glossary, a list of useful addresses, a short bibliography of books for ill children, a list of about 300 references, and an index. (RJM)

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